



Saving the Amazon? Land Grabs and “sustainable soy” as the New Logic of Conservation

By Brenda Baletti

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Brenda Baletti

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

1. Introduction

On July 14th 2010, 1000 people gathered in Santarém’s Yacht Club for a “public audience” regarding the one million ton capacity soy port that multi-national agricultural corporation Cargill built on the Amazon River there in 2000. The meeting, a mandatory part of the federal environmental compliance process, was held in order to solicit public feedback on the Environmental Impact Assessment that Cargill had just completed for the port. Protocol dictates that such assessments be completed *prior* to licensing major construction, although in the case of Cargill’s port, the assessment was being considered, in its second iteration, nine years *after* ground was broken for port construction and six years into the its operation. In 2000, the federal court in Santarém mandated that Cargill act in accordance with Brazilian federal law and complete the environmental compliance process, which it had not implemented prior to construction and by 2006 still had not begun. In 2006, on appeal, the *Superior Tribunal de Justiça*—Brazil’s second highest court—upheld this decision. Despite the federal mandate, Cargill continually avoided completing the assessment through a series of provisional agreements with the notoriously corrupt and industry friendly State Environmental Secretary, who, regardless of sentiment expressed at the public audience, remains the regulatory agency responsible for final approval of Cargill’s license.

Outside of the Yacht Club a large group of people from the Amazon Defense Front (FDA), the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) and the general public protested the public audience arguing that it made a farce of the process of participation. These protesters preferred to make their statement from *outside* of the public audience, arguing that their presence *inside* such events gives the appearance of their participation in a decision-making process about development where their views and positions have no possibility of changing the real nature of the development project. It is, they argued, the social version of “green-washing”—making private development decisions appear democratic. In other words, by “participating” in the public audience, they would be sanctioning their own elimination from the democratic process. Rather than doing so, they remained outside, to express that which had no space inside.

The rapid expansion of agro-industry in Brazil over the past decade is part of a larger phenomenon in Latin America of neo-extractivism – the resurgence of export-oriented extraction of natural resources or agricultural products facilitated through international public-private networks. Over the past three decades, Latin America witnessed an intense cycle of struggle signaled most prominently by events such as the Caracazo, the Zapatista uprising, the Argentine rebellion, and the indigenous uprisings in Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as the formation of strong social movements including the MST in Brazil, the CONAIE in Ecuador, and the EZLN in Mexico, to name a few. These moments and movements created a rupture with the prevailing logic of neoliberalism, which provided a space for counterhegemonic forces to take state power. Although these movements were highly critical of neoliberal development models, most of these new, “progressive” governments continue to rely on neo-extractivism as the primary generators of wealth. Scholars argue that these development strategies are only possible because they have been rendered socially “progressive” through links to poverty alleviation and other social programs. In other words, leftist rhetoric along with the real reduction of poverty levels is used to justify and to build support for the continuation of a neoliberal, developmentalist politics Oliveira 2006, Singer 2009, and Ricci 2010). In this paper, I argue that neo-extractivist governing strategies create the conditions of possibility for land-grabbing in the Brazilian Amazon. To support this proposition, I unpack the approach to “governance” that makes neo-extractivism possible, and through empirical research into the case of soy in the Santarém

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region of the state of Pará in the Brazilian Amazon, I demonstrate the effects of such governance for the environment, for rural life, and for resistance.

Despite the fact that rapid growth in Agro-industry over the last decade launched Brazil as a major player in the global economy, Amazonian neo-extractivism manifest in the advance of the Cargill corporation, soy production, and its “dragging effects” (Fearnside 2007), such as port and road construction, into the region, encountered vehement opposition because of the potential environmental effects of such large-scale development (Fearnside 2002, Soares-Filho et al. 2006, Steward 2007). Responding to this criticism made by communities, academics, and environmentalists, Amazonia’s conservation-conscious policy advisors and makers pose the region’s “emerging governance” as the “most promising” solution to the conundrum of Amazonian soy (e.g. that it is “good” for economic development and “bad” for the environment). They argue that governance can “insure the conservation of most of the forests... while also fostering sustainable development.” The formalized relationships being instituted among “government agencies, private enterprise, and civil society” are, for them, “evidence of an expanding political will in Brazil to manage Amazonia’s abundant natural resources...” These relationships, if adequately supported, will “defend public interests in the region’s natural resources” and by default, eliminate the violence and injustice associated with a lack of government presence in the area (Nepstad et al 2002).²

Conservation-oriented governance, then, is another necessary, “progressive” prerequisite for neo-extractivism. Multi-stakeholder participation has been, therefore, legally formalized as part of the environmental review process, and initiatives to incorporate “grassroots” positions into development projects by organizing a series of localized forums for communities to express their opinions abound (Hall 1997, Perz et al. 2008, Viegas 2006).

This instance of governance, which hinges on direct incorporation of previously marginalized actors into the development planning process, coincides with a second instance of governance—the devolution of government functions to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This second instance, where NGO’s “help” (in their own language) the government to implement already-existing laws is based on the assumption that such NGOs are working for the “public good.” In other words, such interventions are in the public good both in that they seek to uphold the law (e.g. provide justice) and that they are implemented by an NGO, a non-corporate entity. In reality, as this paper will demonstrate, the relationship between law and justice is tenuous and the interests that many mainstream environmental NGOs may serve, intentionally or unintentionally, is not that of a vaguely defined public, but rather of the private actors with whom they work.

In this paper, I use the case of Amazonian soy to analyze the emergence, functions, and effects of such governance. I argue that the effect of the various governance practices and programs surrounding Amazonian soy is not to create more inclusion and justice, but rather to render “the public good” productive for private interests. I focus this argument on two separate but related programs designed to mitigate the effects of Amazonian soy: “Sustainable Soy” and the “Soy Moratorium.” I argue that such programs make neo-extractivism in the form of soy expansion possible, that they have questionable environmental benefits at best and at worst work to re-enforce the hegemony of international environmental organizations, to legitimize agri-business multinationals such as Cargill and the practices necessary to make them sustainable such as massive privatization of public and disputed lands, and to destabilize strategies of resistance—reproducing the very dynamics of inequality and domination that governance seeks to eradicate.

My premise is that governance, which has been defined as “a search for consensus among all those with a distinct opinion on the matters at hand” (Verweij and Josling 2003), presents a technical solution that should serve as a mechanism for creating power neutral relationships (Borras and Franco 2010). Yet inequality is endemic to, and indeed the very basis for, contemporary liberal capitalism, prohibiting the

² This position, while dominant, is controversial. See debate between Amazon conservation scientists in the Policy Forum in the April 2002 issue of *Science*.

effectiveness of such an approach (Smith 1984, Harney 2006). Put differently, bringing multiple actors to the table and letting them speak does not negate the unequal power relationships that underlie and determine the terms of development (Escobar 1995).

Governance, implemented either from above or for above, in other words, does not exit the logic of the given political economy of power, where subjects participate in the (re)production of inequality. Following Foucault, this Power is diffuse, not emanating only from the location of the “state”, but, through these very procedures, existing immanently within its subjects. This governmentality is the mechanism by which contemporary governance operates so that subjects implement discipline on and through themselves.³ Governance, then functions as the coming together of these self-disciplining subjects, (individuals, NGOs and other “civil society” actors, state agencies, multinationals etc.) to fabricate the “public good” - in the case of Brazil poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability—that nonetheless remains inextricable from the goals of accumulation. Governance agreements, such as those that are aimed at “sustainable development” then, should be understood not as the creation of power neutral participatory spaces, but rather as a particular exercise of power where actors and objects come into new political relationships modeled on the principles of a market economy (Foucault [1979] 2008). Rather than functioning as a method for dispersing or decentralizing power, representation in governance, in this re-worked political relationship, becomes another manifestation of domination (albeit a rather sophisticated one) (Zibechi 2010).

Environmental governance, especially surrounding issues of land and land use, increasingly focuses on the promotion of individual private land rights and certification of sustainable extractive methods (Klooster 2005, Oliveira 2009, Akram-Lodhi et al. 2007). Although justified through the language of participation and democracy, environmental governance focuses more on the processes by which “the environment” (both the fictitious commodities that constitute it and the socialities that produce and govern it) can be brought into the process of capital accumulation than on the democratization of environmental access and control. The underlying assumption is that any solution to ecological problems lies in liberalism, with its focus on “frugal government,” the market as a site of justice, and liberal economics—which emphasizes the ability of the individual consumer to direct the market through their consumption practices. In other words, environmental governance presumes that elements of capitalist modernity can be harnessed to solve “environmental problems” (McCarthy 2004).

I argue that in posing the market as a neutral site of regulation and democracy as its method, such environmental governance effectively defuses opposition, creates new (green) markets for commodified nature, and cements the hegemony of the NGOs and corporations that enact it. I offer a detailed analysis of how the emergence of a particular governance regime in the lower Brazilian Amazon has reconstituted political relationships. I use the example of Agribusiness (Cargill), International Environmental NGOs (TNC, WWF, CI) (henceforth ENGOS) and Amazonian soy specifically to underscore the intimate relationship between market-oriented conservation, neo-extractivism (and its associated processes of dispossession and land privatization) and governance. In the final section, I use empirical data from the municipality of Belterra near Santarém, to demonstrate that this new political configuration has questionable effects for conservation, but concrete and deleterious effects for rural life. By examining governance in its capillary form—in the actual programs and practices that it “works” through—I illuminate how the broad construct of governance is mediated through the categories of participation and conservation.

This research draws on 18 months of research over three years into the case of Amazonian soy, including 74 semi-structured interviews with soy farmers and dispossessed small farmers, INCRA (national agency for colonization and agrarian reform) and other government and NGO employees, social movement activists and Cargill employees, as well as focus groups in “disappearing” communities, participant observation in meetings, conferences, and direct actions against agribusiness, and analysis of

³ The “neoliberal governmentality” literature explores more specifically how the both the devolution of state functions to non-state actors and the extension of market-logic to state functions constitute a particular form of Power. See for example Rose 1999, Gupta and Ferguson 2002, Hart 2004, Li 2007.

newspaper articles, land documents, published government-sponsored and Cargill-sponsored reports as well as internal government documents from both IBAMA and INCRA.

2. The Emergence of Amazonian Governance

The most common argument for implementing environmental governance policies, which fit within the larger framework of “participatory,” “pro-poor,” or “good” governance, in Amazonia today is that development is inevitable and therefore must be done “sustainably.”⁴ Further, nearly everyone from developmentalists to development critics argue that Brazil has sophisticated, progressive laws, regarding both citizenship and the environment that are simply not enforced because the state lacks the capacity to do so (see, for example, Benatti 1998, TNC 2006, Hochstetler and Keck 2007, Holston 2008). Many of these “perfect laws,” however, were written into the Brazilian constitution as the result of compromises struck between government and the social movements that took power during the transition to democracy. Many constitutional writers wrote these laws with the awareness that they were largely symbolic because their implementation would be impossible within the existing government structure (Holston 2008). In other words, unenforceable laws were a state strategy to simultaneously appease both the left and the right. In the framework of governance, the logic that follows from the assertion of “good but unenforceable laws” is that there is a failure of the state that can only be solved through external assistance (e.g. private business and NGOs). In effect the “failure of the state” becomes the primary justification for law enforcement through partnerships with non-governmental organizations and private parties.

In this section, I provide historical contextualization for how “governance” emerged as a way to incorporate environmental and social critiques of development practices. I briefly review how and why the military government’s modernization strategy failed and how new development approaches by ENGOs and Brazilian state and federal governments incorporated development critiques regarding both participation and environmental impacts cementing the hegemony of ENGOs and the ideology of “participatory sustainable development” in Amazonia. Finally, I argue that seemingly easy resolution of contradictory elements in the ideology of “sustainable development” along with the rise of a “progressive” government set the stage for the governance paradigm that made neo-extractivism possible.

1.1 Modernizing the Amazon

The perpetual arguments about Amazonia’s imminent subsumption by the market have yet to prove true. To make this inevitable development a reality, Brazil’s military government (1964-85) acted to secure the nation’s borders, develop resources, and solve the massive and growing landless problems in the south and the northeast. They created development institutions and policies, substantial (and ultimately unsustainable) state subsidies, tax exemptions for big businesses (providing incentives for foreign direct investment in cattle and mining), and colonization programs for the poor, to move people, infrastructure, and business into the region, or as then president Emilio Garrastazu Medici (wrongly) put it, to move “men without land to a land without men” (Foweraker 1981, Ozório de Almeida 1992, Becker 1995, Hall 1997).

When the 1980s debt crisis hit Latin America, it became apparent that the seemingly ‘unstoppable onward march’ of capitalism had been possible only through considerable external subsidies (Cleary 1993). It was also clear that although investment may have benefitted private interests, the government’s projects had largely failed—SUDAM was wracked by corruption scandals; millions of cruzeiros had disappeared; the great road construction had ground to a halt, leaving Amazonia’s “highways” unpaved; the National Agency for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) had settled only ten thousand of the planned one million settlers; the forest itself was disappearing at an alarming rate; and violent land conflict was escalating (Kohlhepp 1980, Alston et al. 1999, Simmons 2004). The trend in Amazonia was toward more economic and social heterogeneity than toward homogenization and equivalence through capitalist conversion. High transport costs, environmental limitations, and the application of large-scale blanket policy/development strategies to a highly economically and culturally diverse people, *already* populated

⁴ For examples of these governance models see the FAO on food security <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/018/k6367e.pdf>, or the World Bank (IRBD 1992). For Amazonian examples, see The Nature Conservancy 2006, or Nepstad et al. 2006.

this land “without men” meant that the “inevitable” development, faltered (Cleary 1993).

1.2 Development Critiques to Sustainable Development

The rapid rate of Amazonian deforestation (over 21,000 square kilometers per year at the end of the 1970s (INPE 2008)) associated with modernization was, in a sense, a boon to the ENGOs who were losing support for their preservation-oriented conservation model, which sought to keep land and resources out of the market, within the US (Corson 2010). In 1970s, these ENGOs began to look outward, lobbying the US Congress to support international projects based in a critique of the environmental devastation associated with development projects such as those implemented by the World Bank and USAID (Keck 1995). Through this new *internationalism* ENGOs compiled a broad spectrum of support from political and corporate interests, because they provided a means for enacting an “environmental” politics while avoiding confrontations with the environmental impacts of American consumption (Hecht and Cockburn, 1989, Hochstetler and Keck 2007, Corson 2010). Increasing environmental awareness and popular demands to protect global environmental resources combined with a shrinking neoliberal state in the 1980s, meant that to meet the increasing demand for conservation, both the US and Brazilian governments outsourced such services to the very organizations that were producing that demand through popular campaigns (Hochstetler and Keck 2007, Brockington and Sholfield 2010). Environmental protection requirements became addendums onto funding for national and regional projects in Brazil, forcing governments to establish environmental agencies and programs often managed by these ENGOs (Porto-Gonçalves 1989, 2001). Through a series of programs created in conjunction with the emergence of the neoliberal economic program, including the Debt-for-Nature swaps,⁵ NGO/government partnerships to manage protected areas, and alliances with local people, the ENGOs firmly established themselves across the developing world.

International concern with biodiversity by these organizations and therefore their constituencies spurred interest in the biodiverse rich Amazon and the re-imagination of the region as a global resource (Porto-Gonçalves 1989, Hecht and Cockburn 1990, Hochstetler and Keck 2007). The US-exported “fortress conservation” model, however, encountered intense opposition for ignoring local issues and the rights of the indigenous and traditional people (West et al. 2006, Brockington et al. 2006). It became apparent that to reconcile the contradictions of conservation and justice, they needed to incorporate the local people into conservation agendas..

The Rubber Tappers, a movement for land rights originally based in the labor movement, forged a relationship with American, British, and Brazilian environmentalists to access international support for their territorial sovereignty (Hecht and Cockburn 1989, Porto-Gonçalves 2008). After rubber tapper leader Chico Mendes’s assassination at the hands of large landholders in 1988, the rubber tappers and the Brazilian government developed the model of the “extractive reserve” where traditional people would continue to use their land according to their already existing practices, which would, in theory, conserve nature. While some celebrate this alliance as one that produced new subjectivities organized around ecology *and* social justice (Allegretti 1990, Keck 1995, Hochstetler and Keck 2007), this alliance continues to be an uneasy one, fraught with contradiction and conflict. Rather than providing for self-determination by the rubber tappers, formalization of the Extractive Reserve model into Brazilian environmental law established management of these reserves by a committee, consisting of government employees, NGOs, and traditional people. Participation by the people, in other words, became one element in a multi-stakeholder governance model, rather than the autonomy the rubber tappers had struggled for. This set the terms for the participatory model development that would become the norm under sustainable development.

The Bruntland Report (UN 1987) formalized ongoing incorporation of the social and environmental critiques of modernization into the “sustainable development” paradigm—environmentally and socially ‘friendly’ development to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

⁵ In Debt for Nature swaps, the NGO (or government) “buys” a portion of a country’s foreign debt and the debtor country redirects the amount purchased into a conservation trust that is then administrated by that NGO (Deacon and Murphy 1997).

generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable development conceptually overcame the antagonisms of conservation, justice, and development by offering a simple consumption-based solution to the environmental crises inherent in late market capitalism (Igoe, Neves, Brockington 2010). It is also a historical marker for the emergence of “the environment” as an object of governance.

International meetings such the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 sought to create “sustainable development,” through strategic alliances among movements, NGOs, and governments. The PPG-7 program (an agreement between the Brazilian government and international government agencies, namely USAID and NASA), debt-for-nature swaps and other homologous programs were the logistical means by which the contradictions among development, conservation and social justice were minimized or obscured, and relationships among environmentalists and governments moved from, as Marianne Keck (2005) describes it, “adversary” to “collaborative.” In the process, these NGOs came to dominate environmental policy making in the Amazon, and much of Latin America.

Although a key element in the capital-friendly “sustainable development”, the strategy of creating protected areas dominant in the 80s and 90s was ultimately limiting for the economic development because, whether in fortress conservation or its “community-based” successor, such conservation ultimately meant taking land out of the market.⁶ As Brazil’s economy recovered from crisis and resources became available for internal development, namely extractive-based development, keeping land out of the market “made less sense,” as the president of Pará’s land agency put it in an interview, and a new conservation-development strategy became necessary.

1.3 Neo-extractivism under the Workers Party

When worker’s party leader Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva was elected in 2002 with over 60% of the popular vote, many on the left hoped that that his presidency would mark break with the aggressive neoliberal agenda pursued by Brazilian presidents arguably since the return to democracy in 1985 (Guimarães 2004, Morais and Saad-Filho 2005). Lula, however, had capitulated to the neoliberal financial sector even before his election, and his centrist coalition government’s policies regarding national development, namely extractive-based development, proceeded along the same lines as his predecessors, marking a contradiction between an image of reformism and a practice of continued neoliberalism (Ricci 2010). Further, although Lula campaigned on a platform of Agrarian Reform his government placed significantly more emphasis on the expansion of agro-industry as a key strategy for cementing Brazil’s place as a world economic power.⁷

During the 1990s, the agro-industrial agricultural model that had intensified alongside and in opposition to the smallholder struggle for land in the 1980s, consolidated “agri-business” into a political-economic block that included the agrarian, cattle-raising, industrial, mercantile, mineral, and timber, sectors and their associated technological and ideological systems controlled by state partnerships with national and international financial interests (Fernandes 2009, Porto-Gonçalves 2010).⁸ With the spike in soy and sugar prices in 2003, and the consequent rapid expansion of export-oriented industrial agricultural production (soy exportation alone grew 35% that year, and agro-industrial expansion continued to grow at a rate of 22% per year), Lula and the media hailed agribusiness as Brazil’s “heroes” (Zibechi 2004). Lula’s administration supported industrial, export agriculture by embracing the policies of the WTO and World Bank, continuing tax-exempt status for export oriented agribusinesses, legalizing transgenic soy by presidential decree, granting credits through the national bank for agribusiness projects, opening national

⁶ Units of Conservation are also central to the process of accumulation. See Brockington and Sholfield (2010)

⁷ For example, Lula’s first Secretary of Agriculture, Roberto Rodrigues was a former executive at food giant Sadia and went on to head the inter-american ethanol commission. Also, government spending on agribusiness outspent its support of small famers—nearly half of Brazil’s population—by more than 5 times (Zibechi 2003).

⁸ The strongest expression of which is in the *Bancada Ruralista*, the multi-partisan congressional group whose mission is to defend the interests of large rural landholders and typically controls approximately one quarter of congressional seats making it the largest special interest group in Congress (INESC 2007).

parks to logging interests, creating new territorial zoning projects to facilitate development, and planning a series of infrastructure projects nationwide to facilitate agro-industrial exports, and importantly, in 2010, passing the legislation “Terra Legal” to streamline the process of “regularizing” informally held land (the majority of Amazonian land and of rural land more broadly) and changing the work of INCRA in the Amazon to prioritize regularization (privatization) ahead of land reform (a shift in priorities upheld by his successor Dilma Rouseff) (Fearnside 2007, Jepson and Brannstrom 2010, Neto 2010).

Government support of agribusiness expansion is part of a larger program that hinges on the linking of social programs with neo-developmental policies. Academic analysts that favor Lula call this linking a “new social contract” (Guimarães 2004) while critics call it the “functionalization of poverty” (Oliveira 2006). Through programs such as *Bolsa Família* (the Family Allowance, expanded under Lula to provide a monthly stipend to over 12 million families), that move people out of abject poverty, combined with the rhetoric of participation, citizenship and reform, the government guarantees a large base of support that allows it to continue and intensify the very neoliberal economic practices that create inequality. In effect, unequal economic expansion is legitimized by programs that alleviate poverty in the short term, despite the fact that they do not address the systemic production of poverty (for a detailed discussion of “*lulismo*” see Oliveira 2006, Martins 2006, Singer 2009, and Ruda 2010).

This is part of a trend in Latin America over the past 10 years as “progressive” governments have come into power with the support of movements seeking to break with neoliberalism. Although the left was highly critical of the impacts of neoliberal development models, most of these governments continue to rely on agricultural and resource extraction as the primary generators of wealth. Neo-extractivism is characterized by an active state that implements re-territorialization (zoning/infrastructure projects, formalization of property rights, in Brazil shifting agrarian reform to areas not needed by agroindustry, etc.), creating administrative and financial support for extractive industries and producing new “global players” in the form of state and private transnational companies (Zibechi 2009, Gudynas 2010).⁹ Neo-extractivism appears politically progressive, in that it is linked to poverty alleviation strategies; it is justified through the argument that its profits will serve the needs of the poor and using the language of participation. The result is intensified development where consent is formalized through participatory development planning and its organization of communities by NGOs, by the requirement of public audiences into the environmental review process, and by the proliferation of non-binding multi-stakeholder development agreements.

The Brazilian Amazon’s vast wealth of extractive resources (timber, minerals, agricultural land, water energy) and its large economically depressed population make it the emblematic site for neo-extractivism, however, its conservation potential means that the neo-extractive program encounters concerted resistance from the global environmental community as well as from traditional, indigenous, and migrant smallholders. In response, I argue, neo-extractivism must appropriate another form of progressivism—environmentalism. In other words, while the “pro-poor” progressiveness of neo-extractivism makes it possible as a national strategy, its “greening” is necessary for its implementation in the part of the country that houses the vast majority of these resources. It what follows, I outline how one project to “green” agricultural extractivism functions. Through an empirical discussion of this strategy’s effects, I demonstrate how it compromises the livelihoods of the rural poor through dispossession and also the Amazonian environment.

3. Soy in the Amazon: Sustainable Development for the 21st Century?

⁹ Brazilian neo-extractive corporations are some of the biggest in the world: *Vale do Rio Doce* is the world’s second largest mining company, Petrobras is the 4th largest oil producer and the 5th largest corporation in terms of market value; JPS Firboi is the largest beef producer; Braskem is the 8th largest petrochemical company; Brasil Foods is the largest exporter of processed meat; Votorantim is the 4th largest cellulose producer; and the Brazilian Development Bank, BNDES, responsible for funding most of this development and for providing the means for the financial collaboration of Public Private Partnerships, is the biggest development bank in the world.

By 2008, agro-industrial exports accounted for 25% of Brazilian GDP and 36% of its exports, resulting from skyrocketing agricultural commodity prices during the previous five years. Most of Brazil's soy production occurs in the center and south of the country. Soy grown in the center-west is far from the ports where soy can make its exit to international markets. One of the major obstacles to expansion of Brazil's agriculture has been its lack of transportation infrastructure, namely its nearly non-existent highway system in the center-west and the north, which adds high transport costs to its relatively low-cost commodity production. Agricultural exporters such as Bunge and Cargill who purchase hundreds of thousands of tons of soybeans from the center-west annually must move their product over several hundred kilometers of highway to the Madeira River, transfer it to small barges and float it downriver to the Amazon where it is transferred to larger barges to move it to the Atlantic Ocean for export to Europe and China. The Santarém–Cuiabá highway (BR-163), built but only partially paved by the military government offers a direct route from Mato Grosso to the Amazon that could reduce transport costs by up to 40%. Cargill built its port on the Amazon River in Santarém in 2000 anticipating that the road would be paved through one of Brazil's recent public/private initiatives.¹⁰

Prior to the port construction, but in anticipation of Cargill's arrival and the paving of BR-163, then-mayor (now federal deputy) of Santarém, Lira Maia, commissioned the federal agricultural agency, EMBRAPA, to test soy-growing viability in the region and to implement a regional soil survey to map soil potential for agro-industry (EMBRAPA 2008). Lira Maia then launched a public relations campaign to attract developers to the region. According soy farmers interviewed, Maia brought EMBRAPA's map to the soy growing region of Mato Grosso to show the farmers the vast area of potential soy planting, and touting the region's low transport costs and cheap land. In the late 1990, soy farmers began to come in waves to the new "soy frontier," purchasing tens of thousands of hectares in soy-viable areas from the large population of smallholder migrant farmers who live along the BR-163 in the Amazon uplands. INCRA's (the agency responsible for Agrarian Reform) own superintendent also made trips to Mato Grosso to make land deals with soy farmers and several Incra employees were implicated in 'Operation Faroste' a scandal where a false real estate company sold tens of thousands of hectares of land with fraudulent titles over the internet, primarily to soy farmers from the south and to loggers. The vast majority of this land was located in Agrarian reform settlements, and Incra employees, eleven of whom, including the superintendent, were arrested and jailed temporarily, produced the false titles.

Environmentalists were particularly concerned with the potential impacts of soy and its dragging effects because the driver of soy expansion is not national development but the less controllable and less predictable international market (Fearnside 2002, Hecht 2005). Especially because the market price for soy was skyrocketing and because land tenure is such an unclear issue in the state of Pará (Oliveira 2009 estimates that 67% of land in the state has no clear title or fraudulent title) there was a concern that rapid deforestation would erupt in an area that still has a relatively large amount of primary forest. Largely unmentioned were the potential negative effects of soy expansion on the area's large rural population.

Amazonia's leading policy-oriented ecologists argued instead that the region needed soy. development especially because its large poor population needed more resources, that therefore soy was inevitable, and would actually be a good thing for the region if accompanied by "governance" (Nepsted et al. 2002). This call for governance was taken up by the government and by the NGOs (many of whom were also making this call) in two ways – participation and devolution. The governmental response was the implementation of the Ecological Economic Zoning Plan for the BR 163 (ZEE), a participatory development plan that re-zones land use in the region to facilitate "sustainable development". The ZEE divides the region into protected areas and areas for intensive and extensive forms of neo-extractivism (mining, timber extraction, industrial agriculture, and hydro-electricity). Although it is a political response to the problem of soy in Amazonia, the ZEE does not directly address the issue of monoculture production in an area valued for its standing forest. This was a problem taken up by the NGO-Multinational

¹⁰ *Avança Brasil*, Brazil's US \$48 billion development plan for 200-2007, as well as the Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (US \$503 billion) and PAC II (US \$872 billion) all include funding earmarked for paving the BR-163 (Brazil, MPOG 1999, 2010).

corporation alliances through voluntary licensing programs.

In what follows, I explain how a network of NGOs discursively rendered Amazonian soy a problem that could be solved (by them) through the production of a different type of environmental value—soy that was unsaleable because of its environmental image was rendered “green” and desirable through environmental licensing. In unpacking how the solution of “governance” is deployed to mitigate the effects of contradictory projects, I highlight the difference between program rhetoric – which focuses the idea that stopping deforestation is an apolitical, universal public good, the natural ability of markets to provide conservation incentives, and the idea of justice through existing laws – and program logistics – which equate private needs with the public good, manipulate markets, and try to re-write laws. I then examine the socio-environmental effects of these programs in the highlands near the city of Santarém in the state of Pará.

3.1 Voluntary licensing: Sustainable Soy and the Soy Moratorium

Voluntary licensing is one of many types of certification programs that have proliferated in the food system most visibly in the form of food labeling (e.g. “fair trade,” “organic,” “shade grown”). Such initiatives function as a Polanyian ‘double movement’ against neoliberalism, modulating the effects of forcing ‘fictitious commodities’ into the market by redistributing profits or re-embedding ethics in product value so as to change the terms of exchange (Muttersbaugh 2005, Guthman 2007). In the case of ‘sustainable soy,’ such licensing takes advantage of the publically perceived advantages of such programs to intentionally depoliticize the issue of Amazonian soy and to render an ethico-environmental problem a technical one. An examination of the mechanisms by which such value is re-embedded into industrial soy through certification-type projects places doubts on the possibilities for such programs to mitigate the effects of exploitation.

There have been two separate, but related, licensing-type programs implemented, by The Nature Conservancy (TNC)/Cargill (Responsible Soy) and by a group of Transnational Corporations and conservation NGOs (the Soy Moratorium) that seek to address the environmental problem of soy production in the Amazon. To understand how they address the problem, we must first understand how they define it. In 2006 Greenpeace launched a public relations campaign against Cargill, including a documentary and an article, “Eating up the Amazon”, decrying the ecological and social effects of soy agriculture and coordinated a direct action against the Cargill port. Articles proliferated about soy in the Amazon in the local, regional and national press and as Cargill puts it, “Everyone from the BBC to Al Jazeera has made the trek to Santarém, an isolated city reachable only by boat or airplane, to report on the situation.” The problem with soy, according to Greenpeace and TNC, was its potential to cause deforestation of virgin forest for soy production as had happened in *Mato Grosso* (Jepson 2003, Wolford 2008).

In interviews, the vice president and president of the soy growers union, reported that the bad press forced them to find a way to green their image, and so they partnered with TNC. TNC, whose core mission is “conserving land to protect species,” works in over 30 countries, is the US’s third largest nonprofit by assets and its largest environmental nonprofit by revenue. Its director is a former managing director at Goldman Sachs and it is repeatedly ranked as America’s most trusted non-profit. TNC approaches conservation according to what Stephens and Ottoway (whose 2003 exposé in the *Washington Post* revealed the TNC’s questionable actions including stealing mineral rights and allowing destructive oil drilling for profit on its land) call “compatible development”—combining the needs of business with the needs of environmentalism. Following this model, the world’s most egregious environmental polluters can work as partners with TNC either through their “corporate leadership circle” or by directly funding projects, which, TNC argues is undesirable but necessary because it gives these corporation a stake in these projects. They argue that these corporations will either wreak havoc on the world themselves, or will find “sustainable” ways to expand by working together with conservation organizations. In other words, “there is no alternative”—the Amazon needs increased production, and the Amazon needs conservation. That these projects are largely contradictory is not the problem; the problem, for TNC and similar NGOs, is one of governance.

TNC’s argument for “governance” depends on the problem of Amazonian development being

turned into a technocratic one of deforestation and of finding appropriate measures to curb it, rather than a political one of competing visions for Amazonia. Their glossy brochures do away with other interpretations of this problem expertly:

Amidst all the arguments over the Amazon there is one point of consensus: deforestation should be reduced. In theory, there are two ways that might happen. The first, given that most deforestation in the Amazon is illegal, is that Brazilian authorities enforce laws against deforestation. But the Amazon is very large, the presence of the authorities is patchy and enforcement in the absence of other measures is unlikely ever to be a success: both sticks and carrots are necessary. The second way to reduce deforestation is to work directly with those responsible and change their behavior. For this, the people to reach are not the traditional partners of environmental organizations in the Amazon, like indigenous people, rubber-tappers or subsistence farmers, who clear relatively little forest. The key people to reach are the big deforesters: ranchers and commercial farmers. Very soon biofuel producers will be joining the party, as Brazil reinforces its position as the world's leading producer of sugar-cane ethanol. So the expansion of commercial agriculture into the Amazon... is driven by very powerful market demands that will not disappear anytime soon... The Amazon cannot be insulated from the outside world.

The TNC has rendered expansion of Amazonian soy inevitable; it has made all competing arguments about Amazonia superfluous and reduced them to a technical issue of deforestation; argued that a failure of government means that the only effective regulation comes from the stick (forced compliance that the government cannot do on its own) and the carrot (market-incentives); justified an alliance with big business, and made smallholders irrelevant to the situation.

TNC and Cargill joined several other NGOs (WWF and IPAM), Aboive (Brazilian Association of Industrial Vegetable Oils, Anec (National association of cereal exporters), and importantly, local organizations (the rural worker's union) whose presence as "local people" legitimized the process as "participatory", in enacting the Soy moratorium. The moratorium is a voluntary agreement between buyers, growers, and civil society that went into effect in June 2006 and was subsequently extended for three years, that put a moratorium on purchasing soy grown on land that was deforested in order to grow soy. The moratorium's founding document (2006) focuses on the concept of "governance" – arguing that this "Soy Working Group's" purpose to help the government to develop the capacity to "implement legislation and existing laws." Like Sustainable Soy—the Cargill/TNC/soy grower agreement for making the same guarantee for soy produced specifically in the Santarém area—the moratorium is premised upon the idea that deforestation is the problem, and that governance is the solution.

3.1.1 "The Carrot" in Theory

Licensing seeks to internalize potential externalities, thereby minimizing the exploitation (in this case, of the environment) that capitalist competition tends to create in its "race to the bottom." This involves setting standards, in this case, of production, and monitoring the meeting of those standards, or verification (Guthman 2007). In the case of Sustainable Soy/the Soy Moratorium, buyers agree not to purchase soy that was grown on land deforested beyond the size of the legally required reserve (in the Amazon this was 80% of one's property and has since, through these negotiations been reduced to 50%) in order to produce that soy. A third party (TNC/Soy Working Group) verifies whether or not producers have met these requirements, thereby authorizing the buyer to purchase the product. The agreement is voluntary in that it is not enforceable by law. In the case of Cargill and Santarém's soy growers, the agreement could also be construed as coercive in that there is only one other regional buyer of soybeans, Avis Pará, who purchases approximately 10% of regionally produced beans. After the soy controversy instigated by Greenpeace drew negative attention to soy growers in the region, banks stopped giving farmers loans without collateral. Normally, a farmer can use their land as collateral, but because 67% of land in the state of Pará is not titled, most farmers there do not have this option (Oliveira 2009). Cargill, then becomes the only entity capable of extending the credit that is necessary for industrial production, and to access this credit, farmers are forced to participate in the program. In other words, the carrot is also the stick.

Voluntary agreements must be based on *demonstrating* the difference between non-licensed and licensed commodities. In other words, there is no other quality, such as taste or appearance that would suggest that soy produced under the moratorium program is better, that would make it possible to differentiate that soy from other soy, or that could even prove that it was actually produced on land that was not recently deforested. Verification by a trusted source is key to making believable claims. NGOs, then, become indispensable in the governing relation – they are able to transfer consumer confidence in them to the producer who works in partnership with them.¹¹ This is the production of value—soy produced in the Amazon but not under this program, for all intents and purposes has no value, as farmers have almost no local buyer and no way to access markets without Cargill’s mediation.

3.1.2 “The Carrot” in Practice

The soy moratorium’s founding document stipulates that farmers must not deforest any new land for soy planting after 2007; that farmers comply with the forest code; that they reforest land that is over the legal maximum for deforestation; that farmers legally hold title to their land within two years of entering the program; that within 2 years the soy working group develop a way to verify the above; and for the purchasing companies, that they sign the National Pact to eradicate slavery, and if farmers do not comply with these criteria their soy will not be purchasable. Until 2009, no system was developed that could monitor deforestation of less than 100 hectares. Given that most farms in the Santarém area are between 200 and 1500 hectares in size, it is likely that such a large grain of analysis would fail to detect deforestation on soy farms. In a 2009 interview, TNC’s Sustainable Soy program director said that TNC had designed a system sufficient to monitor deforestation on a farm-by-farm basis; however this system only covers the highlands of Santarém/Belterra (the area in the Sustainable Soy Program), not the entire area covered by the moratorium. He stressed in his interview that there was no other entity that had TNC’s technological sophistication – no else had a system that could monitor this grain of analysis. This interview occurred in September 2009, indicating that until then, no one had been capable of effectively monitoring whether deforestation for soy production was taking place.

TNC’s terms of agreement with Cargill change yearly and the terms of the contract are not made public, which gives rise to the question—what exactly are they licensing? According to TNC interviews, the 2009 agreement stipulated that farmers must have entered into the process to get an environmental license, which means that they must have submitted an application to register for the rural registry with the notoriously corrupt state environmental secretary. Importantly, this requirement is met by *submitting* paperwork; farmers do not have to receive a response from the state. The program director argued that waiting for a response from the inefficient state bureaucracy would not make sense because it is not TNC’s nor the farmers’, responsibility if the state does not have the capacity to respond (nor the political will), and they should not be punished for that. In other words, contrary to claims elsewhere, TNC is not concerned with the effectiveness of governmental process, only that farmers comply with its own rules. Further, when TNC finds a farmer violating the forest code, they report them to Cargill, not to the government. So it appears that they are not actually advocating for the enforcement of laws, but for the terms of the agreement with Cargill. This runs counter to TNC’s stated mission to facilitate implementation of existing laws.

The second requirement for “sustainable soy” is that farms must be located within an area of “consolidation” or “expansion” within the ZEE—a plan that was written in part to create exactly these types of areas, zoned for either mechanized agriculture or intensive logging. Areas that are not explicitly protected areas are zones of consolidation or expansion. The subtext is that while soy farmers cannot infiltrate indigenous or traditional territory (which are protected areas), the Sustainable Soy agreement allows for their encroachment on Agrarian Reform settlements or other areas where migrant farmers (non

¹¹ For example Grist.org, one of the US’s top environmental websites, suggested, based on TNC’s advice that consumers only purchase soy products produced by companies participating in the soy moratorium (which includes all of the agribusiness giants). <http://www.grist.org/article/2009-04-24-navigating-non-dairy/>

ethnically/culturally protected people) live.¹² It is exactly these migrant farmers who are displaced through soy expansion. The struggle for/over land tenure is at the heart of Amazonian land conflict. TNC's research, which they have not released publically, on land tenure and soy, concluded that a large percentage of their farmers did not have tenure (Barreto 2009). First, they tried to negotiate for that tenure with the government, and when unsuccessful, they decided to sidestep the issue, leaving it unaddressed in their program. Finally, "sustainable soy" requires that participating farmers comply with the recommendations made in the Environmental Impact Statement.

While TNC argues that it is trying to force farmers to comply with the law. In private negotiations, they actually tried to change the laws. Internal government documents revealed that Cargill and TNC representatives met with officials from INCRA, IBAMA (responsible for managing non-protected federal lands and permits), and the *Ministerio Público*. In these meetings, they argued that the social and economic impacts of soy development are positive for the region, and asked these agencies to therefore facilitate soy expansion by regularizing the property rights of the soy farmers, reducing all of their existing fines to 10% of their economic value, accepting data provided by TNC as "official" data (such as geographic data), and expediting authorizations for deforestation. They also proposed that the legal reserve, which at the time was 80% of a given piece of property that must be kept deforested, be allowed to be re-located off of the property (and have even proposed that they be located inside of already existing reserve areas)—which would theoretically allow soy farmers to be in compliance with the soy moratorium/sustainable soy while deforesting up to 100% of their property. These terms indicate the purpose of "governance" was not to help the government to implement existing laws more effectively, but rather to manipulate existing laws to serve the purposes of soy expansion.

3.2 The effects of Soy Governance strategies

3.2.1 Environmental effects

Whether the moratorium has been effective in stopping soy-related deforestation remains questionable. As stated above, the TNC and Greenpeace admitted that a monitoring system that can actually track deforestation on the smaller size farms that are more common in the Amazon has not existed until this past year. Further, the number of farms found to be deforesting in order to grow soy in the Amazon biome actually increased between 2007 and 2009 (Greenpeace 2009). Different researchers produce different data on soy-related deforestation rates (Cohenca 2005, Coelho 2008, Weinhold et al. 2010). There is no evidence that changes in deforestation rates are linked to the moratorium, rather than, for example, the changing price of soy on the international market. In fact, most arguments for effectiveness of the moratorium rely on conclusions that are based on correlations rather than evidence based causation, and propaganda by NGOs completely misrepresents existing data. For example, Greenpeace's website states, "thanks to the Soy Moratorium, soy is no longer the chief driver of Amazon deforestation." During the primary period of soy expansion into the Amazon (2001-2008), 80% of deforestation of the Amazon happened in Brazil and 70% of that has been cattle related and only 10% soy related—in other words, soy was never the chief driver of Amazonian deforestation. There is no data indicating that the soy moratorium has impacted soy expansion. To the contrary, most evidenced-based arguments for the slowing of soy expansion point to falling/stagnating prices on the global market (Nepstad et al. 2006, Malhi, et al. 2008). In July of 2010, even Greenpeace, the moratorium's biggest supporter, admitted that the results of the moratorium were inconclusive. The apparent success of both the soy moratorium and the sustainable soy program are based on rhetorical expertise rather than evidence based scientific research.

3.2.2 Social effects

When Lira Maia brought Matto Grosso's farmers maps of potential soy areas near Santarém, he neglected to inform them was that they were an empty landscape. Areas that are good for growing soy are good for many kinds of agriculture. Much of the previously cleared land was cleared by smallholder

¹² There have been numerous requests for recognition of indigenous, traditional and Quilombola territories within areas designated for "expansion" or "consolidation" in ZEE. Taking the ZEE as the starting point for requirements for soy farmers effectively ignores these claims.

farmers – primarily migrant farmers who moved to the region to escape repeated cycles of drought and extreme inequality in land ownership made subsistence for economically poor people in the northeastern Brazil a near impossibility for decades. Government programs and propaganda regarding free land and work in extractive industries attracted hundreds of thousands of poor and landless workers to the Amazon beginning in the late 1960s. Government withdrawal from the region due to financial crisis in the 80s left them feeling “abandoned,” their communities “forgotten,” and the people “stuck.” To this day most remain in small rural settlements farming on small individual plots, cynical about repeated government promises that they have heard over the years for roads, credit, and energy that after forty years have still not arrived.

Since the end of the 1990s, soy farmers moving into the region have offered large payments for land, especially for land with documents. As some smallholders began to sell, incentives for others to sell increased because the social networks that they lived in were broken, schools closed, and pesticide on neighboring soy fields drove pests into their fields. One Santarém-based NGO, *Projeto Saude e Alegria* (PSA, Health and Happiness Project) estimated that twenty-six communities disappeared in the highlands proximate to Santarém between 1998 and 2007.

My empirical research in six of these communities revealed that the people that moved out of these communities tended to move short distances (2-50 kilometers) and closer to urban or transportation infrastructure. Land sale prices varied widely from less than \$100 reais (approximately 35 USD at the time) per hectare to upwards of \$2000 (\$850 USD), largely depending on the time of sale (earlier sales yielded lower prices) and the security of property rights (titled land demands higher prices than other forms of possession). Families who sold land interviewed universally purchased smaller lots than those they had previously inhabited, and usually significantly smaller (e.g. sold 60 hectares and purchased one hectare, or sold 40 hectares and purchased an urban or peri-urban lot measuring 30 x 40 meters were the norm). When purchasing new land, they paid between five and ten times as much per hectare for land that always had less secure property rights. In summary, smallholders generally sold titled land or land with some type of legal possession for a much smaller and more expensive plot of land with no legal property rights. In all cases, the only document that people received was a purchase receipt from the seller. People’s youngest children tended to move with them, while older children often went to the city (Santarém) or dispersed to other rural areas. Family income upon moving to urban areas always included at least one form of government subsidy, usually either social security (*aposentadoria*) or the family assistance program *bolsa familia*. Those that moved to other rural areas continued to plant manioc (the region’s staple crop), while those that moved to urban/peri-urban areas no longer engaged in subsistence agriculture beyond small home gardens.

In communities where most people had left, remaining residents lamented the deterioration of infrastructure, the destruction of their communities, and the loss of their families, many of whom were split up in the process of land selling. They also reported extreme reduction in their ability to grow, which they blamed on soy farmers’ application of pesticides, and said that now they were forced to purchase food that they had formerly grown. “Life” in the remaining community, interviewees said repeatedly, “is difficult, but wasn’t always this way.” Those who remained had generally never received offers to sell.

Many development practitioners in Amazonia, including Sustainable Soy’s program director, argue that subsistence agriculture is “unproductive,” that it threatens Amazonian conservation, and that it would be better replaced by the more “productive” (in terms of surplus) agro-industry. That this is one of the dominant strains in development thinking today is reinforced by the 2008 World Bank Report, which presents models for countries to provide paths “out of agriculture” suggesting that smallholders unable to compete in higher value production exit agriculture. This is based in an assumption that non-agricultural life is better, that production (i.e. profit) is somehow better and/or more secure than subsistence, and that urban employment even exists, which in Santarém is not the case. Migration for waged employment and/or for access to better land is not an uncommon process in these communities. What is uncommon is the disappearance of the communities that have consistently formed a rural safety net when food prices increase, or when other types of employment become scarce. Interview data revealed that relocation and return migration is common among these communities. If there is no place to return to, the cycle of rural life and importantly, its safety net is disrupted.

Consequently, the region's food sovereignty is at risk as soy farms replace subsistence farms. Soy production is for export, so displaced local production must be replaced by importing food from other parts of Brazil. All imported goods to Santarém are expensive for the same reason that soy shipping is expensive – because they must be shipped from afar via river or plane. Such displacement also drives up the price for locally produced food. For example, in Santarém, in 2009, a combination of increased government subsidies for daily living of smallholders, low market prices for the labor intensive *farinha* (a manioc product), extreme weather conditions (very dry summer, very wet winter), and growing urban demand meant that *farinha* prices doubled in Santarém. Rural families who had not planted *farinha* in previous years re-planted intensively again following the rise in prices. For those who no longer have land, this is no longer an option. The threat to food sovereignty is especially severe because there is no consistent form of alternative income for displaced farmers, so purchasing food when prices rise is challenging.

3.2.1 Power effects

The conjunctural changes of the past 10 years, marked by the incursion of Agribusiness into the region and its alliance with organizations that were previously viewed as sympathetic to smallholders means that lines of antagonism are blurred. First, rather than the historical conflict between smallholders and *latifundia* that often erupted in confrontational violence and the forced relocation of smallholders (relationships that were clearly antagonistic), soy farmers usually purchase land from smallholders. The Smallholder reception of these soy farmers range from quite receptive (“it was by the grace of God that the soy farmers appeared and bought our land”) to resigned (“if I had the money to stay, I would not have sold, but I did not have the conditions to refuse the offer, so now we are here [in their new, smaller plot]).” And most soy farmers were on reasonably good terms with the people they displaced.¹³ The negative effects of such displacement may not be obvious until economic times become more difficult. When this happens, and those still eligible turn to the rural workers' union, the union points to “Cargill,” as their adversary. A transnational adversary is less immediate and more difficult to effectively organize through existing resistance strategies.

To respond to this powerful yet diffuse enemy, union leaders built their own international alliances. They said, “How can we fight against Cargill? We have no resources. We do not have access to the national and international media. Greenpeace and PSA are important partners because it is only with them that we have the resources to fight against Cargill.” The union participated in a PSA/Greenpeace “participatory mapping” project to record the effects of soy in Belterra, near Santarém. The Greenpeace release of this map, both in Santarém and at the World Social Forum in Belém in 2009, was hailed by the union, NGOs and the token representatives of the indigenous, traditional, and quilombola communities present at these events as *the* key tool to battling Cargill, soy farmers and Agribusiness in the Amazon.

One and a half years later, the only official use of this map was by Cargill, who incorporated the map into its environmental impact assessment to demonstrate that they had evaluated the negative social impacts of soy, and to argue that port construction's positive impacts outweighed the negative in terms of job creation and regional economic growth. The map, then, was instrumental for governance in multiple ways. It functioned as a tool for Greenpeace to “empower” local actors, offering them resources (financial and technical) with which some thought would make their claims legible to government and media in order to rally political support against Cargill, drawing their energy away from other avenues of resistance. It also provided Greenpeace with the legitimacy that it needed to carry out its anti-soy campaign and to ultimately negotiate the soy moratorium (on their behalf), which incorporated *none* of the social concerns of local actors, rather, as previously discussed, focused strictly on deforestation. Finally, it was a tool for Cargill to argue that it had considered social issues, in order to have its Environmental Impact Assessment, and therefore its port, approved.

Legitimacy of the soy moratorium hinged on the inclusion of “local” actors. Initially, the Santarém

¹³ One farmer, for example, built a water tower near the highway to encourage people to sell him their land and re-locate near the highway, which they did. He and Belterra's mayor (who has greatly facilitated the expansion of soy farming) threw a party to Christen the new “community.”

Rural Workers' Union and the Amazon Defense Front participated in the negotiations, however the Amazon Defense Front (FDA) dropped out, when, as one member put it, "they laughed at our proposal for "soy zero" (no Amazonian soy production)." Other moratorium signatories included NGOs that work on regional social/environmental, but have no constituency in the Santarem area, such as ISA and ISPN. FDA, the CPT, the MST, Via Campesina, and FASE all opted out of the moratorium stating in a letter that it would "only serve to legalize soy in the region" and in interviews that such participation was simply co-optation. The Union and Greenpeace agreed with TNC, arguing in internal emails that although the moratorium is not ideal, negotiation is the only option for stopping transnational corporations from destroying the Amazon. One union representative argued, "the moratorium is our way to participate in managing the future of soy in our region." And so, as discussed in the vignette that opened this paper, formerly more unified resistance was divided as some opted to "participate." The ambiguous results of the moratorium and sustainable soy and the near disappearance of the soy controversy from the media and from everyday discussion in the city despite the fact that the development trajectory of soy is relatively unchanged, indicates that governance neutralized controversy. Perhaps more importantly, it points to the changing terms of the territorial and environmental politics in Amazonia.

4. Conclusion

This paper has sought to articulate how and why this *particular* constellation of governance, which explicitly attends to environmental and social critiques of production, emerged. I have attempted to analyze contemporary conservation as an environmental form of governance, and to demonstrate that one of the primary effects that the latest incarnation of "sustainable development" in the Amazon has been to facilitate a host of land grabs around the city of Santarem, which has meant the dispossession of rural people, the destruction of rural safety nets, and has compromised food sovereignty in the region. I have also sought to demonstrate that programs like Ecological Economic Zoning, "terra legal," and NGO-sponsored licensing work together as a form of governance that shift the relations and interactions of contemporary forms of power and resistance.

I have argued specifically for the link between neo-extractivism and land-grabs. Corporate and corporate-linked land-grabbing would appear to be antithetical to the "progressive" projects of the "leftist" governments that have come to power in Latin America. Bringing land into the market, however, is a necessary part of a rapidly expanding development program that continues to hinge on exploitation of primary resources such as farmland, and the transfer of land from smallholders to large-scale industrial farmers and corporations, and the incorporation of previously protected land (either as units of conservation or agrarian reform settlements) is clearly necessary for such neo-developmental projects and others have made clear that linking such development to anti-poverty programs is key for allowing it to happen. I have demonstrated that the growing pace of neo-extractive development "necessary" to sustain both Brazil's expanding economy and movements' demands for citizenship, participation, and rights that emerged in post-dictatorship Brazil and that cemented the hegemony of president Lula and the workers' party is also constituted by contemporary conservation initiatives that redeploy neo-extractive expansion as environmentally progressive. This "greening," of neo-extractivism itself turns on explicitly environmental and implicitly social claims. Tying neo-extractivism to issues of poverty and environment makes it indispensable to maintain those things, which are deployed apolitically as the "public good." Attending to the "public good" through public participation in the form of multi-stakeholder agreements and participatory forums is not simply privatization of state process; rather it is a re-working of public processes to make them productive for accumulation (Harney 2008). This productivity of the public is one of the key strategy and effects of governance.

The development apparatus has always functioned as a mechanism of control, setting the terms of development debates (Escobar 1995); however, the tactics for doing so have changed under governance. The failure of state is blamed for negative development impacts and "needs" to be improved through non-state voluntary partnerships or through public-private partnerships. In such arrangements, various groups may come to the table, but only a few of them can set the agenda, leaving local actors with the choices to "opt in or out." Assuming that needs of all parties can be addressed through participation ignores the reality that different actors' needs and desires are based in their different material existences, and that

these realities are products of the very relations of force that must necessarily not exist for real equality of power in governance. This is not to say, however, that resistance has been neutralized. Movements are re-organizing and new movements emerging that take this blurring of antagonisms as the point of departure from which they push contractions to redraw the lines of antagonism.

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